

## **Texas Environmental Flows Science Advisory Committee**

Wednesday, November 2, 2011

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

Room F-2210

Austin, Texas 78757

### **Minutes**

#### **Call to order and Approval of meeting minutes from August 10, 2011**

Chairman Bob Huston called the meeting to order. The minutes from the August 10, 2011 SAC meeting were approved by consensus.

#### **FY2012 Budget Update**

Chairman Huston reviewed updated expenditures for fiscal year 2012 SAC activities and reminded members to submit all remaining reimbursement requests for fiscal year 2011 to the TWDB. Chairman Huston thanked the TWDB for reallocating internal funds to allow SB3 activities to continue at both the BBEST and SAC level in fiscal year 2012.

#### **Liaison Reports**

#### **Liaisons**

SAC member Paul Jensen provided an update on the Brazos BBEST. He noted that the group was making good progress and had 1) accepted their latest round of HEFR runs/numbers and 2) have developed a modified drought index to determine hydrologic conditions. The members intend to have their report drafts to editors by early January 2012. The BBEST has been working with the BBASC to keep them up to speed on their analysis.

SAC member Bob Brandes provided an update on the Rio Grande BBESTs. He reported that the Lower Rio Grande BBEST is considering the Lower Laguna Madre and Arroyo Colorado in their analysis along with the Rio Grande Tidal portion. Lower BBEST member Dave Buzan noted that the group is thinking more about how much freshwater is bad for the Lower Laguna Madre rather than how much freshwater is good. The focus is on nutrients and affects to seagrasses. Member Brandes noted that the Upper Rio Grande BBEST had not met since the last SAC meeting. Upper BBEST member Ryan Smith noted the group would be performing habitat/flow curves for 3 sites with existing water quality and biological data. SAC members expressed concern regarding progress of the Upper BBEST and recommended that the members be cognizant of the March 1, 2012 deadline.

SAC member Mary Kelly announced that the Caddo Lake Institute would be holding an instream flow workshop on December 13 and 14, 2011.

SAC member George Ward noted that the Guadalupe/San Antonio BBASC had held initial meeting to discuss work plan development but, beyond that, there was nothing to report.

Colorado/Lavaca BBEST member Dave Buzan reported that the Colorado/Lavaca BBASC held a small work group meeting to evaluate the draft work plan developed by the BBEST.

### **Update on EFAG Meeting**

**Huston**

Chairman Huston provided a recap of his report to the EFAG on September 8, 2011. He noted that the EFAG approved the work plan for the Sabine/Neches BBASCs, including that group's recent work plan addendum. He discussed the draft Trinity/San Jacinto work plan and its recommendation that the resource agencies, specifically TWDB, take the lead in implementing work plan measures. He also discussed funding concerns identified in both work plans.

### **TCEQ Rules for Environmental Flow Standards for the Guadalupe/San Antonio and Colorado/Lavaca Systems**

Kathy Alexander, TCEQ, announced that the TCEQ is hosting a stakeholder meeting to allow opportunity for informal comments to be submitted regarding the development of environmental flow standards for the Guadalupe/San Antonio and Colorado/Lavaca systems. The informal stakeholder meeting will be held on November 3, 2011. The projected schedule for the adoption of environmental flow rules is as follows. Please note that these dates are tentative and subject to change.

Proposal agenda: February 22, 2012

Comment period opens: March 9, 2012

Rule public hearing: April 3, 2012

Adoption agenda: July 25, 2012

### **Presentation/Discussion – Nueces BBEST Report**

Nueces BBEST Chair Sam Vaughn began a discussion of the environmental flow recommendations of the Nueces BBEST.

He identified the geographic scope and gaging stations the BBEST had selected. He noted the group elected to use HEFR to identify the statistical hydrology, but then applied biological and other overlays to determine whether adjustments to the HEFR regime were appropriate. Members Ryan Smith and Dave Buzan explained the BBEST instream flow analysis and recommendations. They noted that while no SB2 type data existed, the BBEST has cross section work performed at 3 selected sites. In their habitat analysis the BBEST superimposed the HEFR generated flow ranges over their habitat availability curves to determine if the HEFR flows were maintaining enough habitat on a species by species, and not by guild, basis. The group concluded that the HEFR numbers would maintain suitable habitat and water quality.

BBEST member Greg Stunz led a discussion regarding the BBEST's Bay and Estuary recommendations. He noted that the group focused mainly on the Nueces River delta and Nueces Bay. The group evaluated the changes from historic conditions, primarily the oyster fishery, and historic inflows to the bay and determined that the system did not constitute a sound ecological environment. In developing their freshwater inflow recommendations the group considered historic water availability, freshwater inflow/salinity relationships, and ecological needs of selected focal species. He noted that the seasonal inflow recommendations were based on meeting the biological needs of all indicator species, while accounting for historical patterns of water availability.

**Establish schedule for Nueces review****All**

The SAC members discussed a schedule for review of the Nueces BBEST report. Conference call dates are as follows:

Instream: 11/16/2011, 10:00

Estuary: 11/17/2011, 3:00

**Discuss FRAT Memo and future FRAT maintenance****Opdyke**

The SAC members discussed the SAC role regarding the Flow Regime Application Tool (FRAT). Members agreed that the FRAT memo is a good stand alone guidance document. The SAC will review the document for comment and eventual approval by the SAC. Comments are due by January 13, 2012.

**Other Discussion Items****All**

There were no other discussion items at this time.

**Public comments**

There were no public comments at this time.

**Future Meeting Dates (Dec 14 – TWDB) and Agenda**

The next SAC meeting is set for December 14, 2011.

Agenda items include:

- Finalize review of the Nueces BBEST report
- Continued work plans discussion

**Adjourn**